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THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2016

Main St. bridge to reopen

Vital Port Colborne artery repaired, will be ready Friday.
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Hospital needs help

NHS puts out the call for more volunteers
Page 5

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Catching air



MICHELLE ALLENBORG/ POSTMEDIA NETWORK
Eric Pugnay, 16, headed to Algopoint skatepark to take advantage of recent warm weather. Purguay moved to Port Colborne with his family about three weeks ago from Hamilton. He said the local skate park is fun and he likes it. Purguay said the park seems to be designed more for bikes, but he was able to make use of some of the rails. Purguay has been skateboarding for four years.

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UPFRONT

United Way \$80,000 short of target

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

With its annual fundraising campaign nearly complete, United Way South Niagara says program funding is at risk if its target is not met.

As of late last week, the campaign was \$80,000 short of its \$650,000 goal.

"We've made some great strides, but we've also had some tremendous setbacks," said Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, the local United Way executive director. Cole-

man-Lawrie said there is often a big push in the last stretch of the campaign, but "last year we didn't seem to be far away a week out."

Details on specific programs or organizations that could be at risk if the goal isn't met won't be known until the committee viewing applications knows final numbers and how to allocate that money.

"All of the agencies that have submitted applications are so worthwhile so it's challenging on our team to make those choices," Coleman-Lawrie said.

She said that United Way knows that money is tight for many people right now, but any amount is helpful to the organization.

"We're not asking folks to dig super deep. If people can pull in and give \$10, \$20..." she said.

Coleman-Lawrie said the organization continues to have a hard time getting the message out to the public of the effectiveness of donating to the United Way.

Money that is donated to United Way South Niagara is allocated for programs at several organizations including Port Care Community Living, The Hope Centre and Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Niagara.

Coleman-Lawrie said I in 3 people access services funded by United Way.

"It's the most effective way to give to your community."

Welland Mayor Frank Campion said United Way South Niagara is a valued organization in the city, saying it contributes to so many programs within so many organizations. Campion said he especially appreciates its action where it comes to youth programming.

"They really are an important part of moving our city forward and making sure people have opportunity," Campion said.

For more information and to donate, visit www.unitedwaysouthniagara.ca or call 905-734-0490.



**TAMARA
COLEMAN-
LAWRIE**



Workers make adjustments to Bridge 19 on Main Street in Port Colborne.

MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Hwy. 3 canal bridge set to reopen

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne Bridge 19 on Main Street, part of Highway 3, is set to reopen March 18 after being closed for nearly six months after a cargo ship crashed into it.

The *Lena J* collided with the bridge Sept. 30 causing major structural damage. Steel beams needed to be replaced for the bridge to be reusable for regular vehicle traffic.

Luc Boisclair, general manager of engineering at St. Lawrence Seaway Management

Corp., said the beams have been replaced and maintained have been finished.

Boisclair said the reason the bridge was out of commission for so long was due to the need to bring in engineers evaluating the damage and any pre-existing conditions.

He said engineers didn't just look at the damage but the bridge overall. After the engineers assessed the bridge, the seaway corporation needed to find a contractor. Boisclair said that all takes time.

Before maintenance and fixing the damage, the bridge had a weight limit. Boisclair said the good news is there is no limit — any vehicle of any weight can use the bridge.

"There are no load restrictions now. The repair went well," he said.

Boisclair said the *Lena J* was responsible for the damage done to the bridge, but he would not comment on who was paying for the bridge to be fixed.

During the bridge closure many nearby businesses were

affected.

December Kathy Fedson, who owns the Deli on Main, said she felt the effects of the bridge closure, which for a period of time coincided with the closure of the bridge. She said people were avoiding going down Main Street because there wasn't anywhere to go.

The reopening of the bridge comes days before the March 21 opening of the Welland Canal.

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Time for Niagara Falls to gamble on New Year's Eve

Niagara Falls is on the brink — what can it do to attract another New Year's Eve concert, which have proven they can draw very large TV audiences but are currently without a television contract?

There are far worse problems a city can be facing, to be sure. And Niagara Falls has the resources to solve this dilemma few other municipalities can match, because since 2013 it has received about \$20 million a year as the host of two provincial casinos.

As long as city council is willing to gamble a portion of that casino funding, this can be seen as a real chance to think outside the box.

It really is an opportunity, not a problem. Here are some options:

Status quo

When negotiations with TV networks finally proved fruitless late last year, the City of Niagara Falls was forced to throw together a show on the fly. And it succeeded, bringing in veteran performers Tom Cochrane, Dennis DeYoung and Alan Doyle.

Thousands of people trekked to Queen Victoria Park as usual to enjoy the show. The hotels were full as usual. Aside from the fact it drew no national attention whatsoever, it was

basically business as usual.

If all you're looking for from New Year's Eve is a night out for the locals, it worked. But if the point of all this is to market the city, then you need to think bigger.

So why not ...

Go it alone

People aren't tied to their TVs and the old networks like they used to be. It's an Internet world now so to broadcast a live concert, networks like Global or CTV are nothing more than a middle man.

Why not cut out the middle man?

Apparently, it costs about \$3 million to stage, broadcast and bring to air a New Year's Eve concert in Niagara Falls these days.

What's stopping the City of Niagara Falls from cutting off a piece of that \$20 million casino budget to do it all by itself?

The city could do it all — organize it, hire a team to work the cameras and do the behind-the-scenes chores, hire a couple of hosts and broadcast it live on the city website.

That way, all the revenue that's generated would go back to the city and it could do all the promotion of the city and region as a tourist destination it wants.

The casinos and the hotel industry could

chip in some money (the casino has already promised \$50,000). How about making it \$100,000? The tourism industry could ante up some of its Destination Marketing Fee it imposes on diners and hotel patrons to help cover the cost as well.

Live streaming an event like this isn't just the way of the future, it is the way of the present. It's pay-per-view without the pay, and the advertising revenue the show generates would go a long way toward paying for the production.

Maybe the problem all along is that the city was trying to build a 21st-century show using a 20th-century model. Networks are dinosaurs.

Or to think totally out of the box ...

Why not New Year's Eve?

Even the TV network already has some sort of grand New Year's Eve concert on air already anyway, whether it's from Niagara Falls or not.

New York City and Las Vegas claim a really large share of that ground just by being there, and the cost of hiring a hand — let alone three, like New Year's Eve in the Falls seems to demand — is at a premium on that night.

What if Niagara Falls instead staged a

Canada Day super-show?

Presumably most hands would come cheap this time of year on New Year's Eve. There is no American competition for the spotlight that day, and marketing could be piggybacked on the 4th of July celebrations that follow a few days later.

An event like this — which might even work as an all-day concert — would be guaranteed to fill the hotels, and would benefit the entire region by attracting visitors who would take advantage of the good weather to do a little sightseeing.

Would it be more feasible to work with a network on this day? Possibly, but maybe it's time to discard the network idea totally. Again, the city could go it alone.

One point is the City of Niagara Falls has the willpower to try something different, to think big while using a relatively small bit of that \$20 million it gets for the casinos. And by taking control of the broadcast and keeping all the revenues, there is the chance this event might someday pay for itself.

At this point, Niagara Falls needs to ask itself: Is the city that makes a ton of money off its casinos willing to take a gamble on its future?

You're not alone facing the wind, water and fire

GARY TOMMICK

Wainfleet Congregational Christian Church

I love to listen to the driving snow rattling the windows, the pounding of the waves. I love to think of the dark clouds overhead. In different seasons, there would be tons of ice pushed ashore, sculptured and shaped into various sizes by the Master's hand. The staccato sound of cracking ice was not something easily forgotten.

We would watch these storms in my childhood home on the lake through our large picture window, safely ensconced and comfortably shielded by the thick glass panes.

We would sit comfortably on soft cushions on our couches, safe and secure from all danger.

Do you realize that when you go through the storms of life, the Lord is not hiding behind a thick window watching you out of curiosity, helplessly unconcerned and uncaring as you strafe at the oars and fear that you will never overcome this storm?

This is it! That furious squall comes up and those waves figuratively break over your boat so you are nearly swamped, and you cry out with His disciplines "Lord, don't you care? Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

(MK 4:38).

What is Jesus doing? Of all things, He is fast asleep on a soft cushion in this boat. Why was He asleep?

In His human nature, He was exhausted. He created the world and He certainly has no problem controlling it. He simply spoke three words: "peace be still." Then the wind died down and it was completely calm (vs.19). And the disciples were afraid.

They demonstrated true Godly fear, being given a mere taste of the Almighty God.

In fact, they were terrified (vs.20). As frantic as it might seem, they were more terrified of Jesus in the boat with them than they were of the raging storm outside of it. And they asked each other, "who is this, even the wind and waves obey Him?"

He merely speaks and all of creation obeys Him. Who is this?

None can stay His hand or say to Him, "what are you doing." Who is this? He calls the stars by name and the earth is as dust in His scales. Who is this?

This is the King of Kings, forever on His throne, and no power can unseat Him. In His storm, He says to us, I do. Not be afraid.

We need the wind for energy and comfort. We need water for life and our livelihood. We need fire for heating, cooking, industry and 1,001 other things.

But out of control, it is a far different

story. Wind out of control can turn into tornadoes that destroy everything in their path.

Water or waves out of control can turn into tsunamis that can sweep away an entire village. Fire in a fireplace behind a screen or in a woodstove with thick glass can be beautiful, with various shades of hues and colors.

The crackling sound is soothing, and before long you can find yourself dozing off. But fire out of control can eat and destroy, as we have seen.

Very briefly, I would like to mention in passing the fire we had at our family business Welland Lumber, in 1968.

We had just taken inventory and much of our stock was inside the building. A great fire broke out. We experienced the extremes of wind, water and fire.

Our whole family was on vacation in Florida at the time. We were not lying on the beach feeling the gentle wind ruffle our hair. We took the fastest plane home, and the only wind we experienced was out of control as it spread the flames further and faster.

We were not working on our tans from the heat of the sun, but watching helplessly the immense heat from this fire.

We were not enjoying the shimmering waters from the ocean, but watching the

fireman fighting valiantly trying to put out the fire with their hoses. And through no fault of their own, the water damaged as much merchandise as the fire itself.

Some of you have gone through fires and know what I am talking about. I well remember the contrast of gathering shells on the beach to gathering our belongings into our suitcases and rushing home.

But the Lord says these comforting words: "When, not if, you pass through the Waters and the Fire I will be with you" (Isaiah 43:2) through the furnace of affliction until the dross and impurities are removed from us.

How long will this take? Until He sees His image in us. How long will this take? Until we become a bright shining trophy of His grace.

Warren Wiersbe said, "God has two items in His hands - a thermostat and a stopwatch. How long and how hot."

And I can assure you the Lord is not hiding behind a window or asleep on a soft cushion during your trials of life. He is the captain of our salvation, our compass and lighthouse. He is also the fourth person in the furnace with us.

Never lose the wonder of His greatness and His ever present help.

— Gary Tommick is pastor at the **Wainfleet Congregational Christian Church**

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LOCAL NEWS

NHS looking for hospital helpers

FRANKI ALOIAN
Postmedia Network

Every Tuesday at 2 p.m., Kevin Aloian writes his name on a whiteboard and starts his volunteer shift in the emergency department of Welland hospital.

He spends the next three hours going room-to-room in the ER talking to patients, offering them warm blankets or a snack or just some company.

"I'm a listener. I'll listen to what people have to say and that's sometimes a lot of what it is."

Aloian has volunteered at the hospital since November 2013, after retiring from Canadian Tire Financial Services.

"Initially thinking I wanted to do some volunteering to give back to the community in some way," he said.

He visited an open house at the hospital and thought it would be a good place to donate his time.

"The emergency department appealed to me in a sense because you could have a more direct and personal impact in a way."

Beyond interacting with patients, Aloian keeps busy offering assistance in several other ways, whether it be sorting through mail, delivering samples to the lab, making sure supplies are well stocked or guiding people to where they need to go.

He's close at hand to make sure patients and their families are as stress-free as possible.

"You know what you get out of it, I guess, is if you feel that you had a positive experience with a person or you've alleviated some of their stress," he said.

Aloian is one of about 850 active volunteers for Niagara Health System.

The NHS is looking for more to join the team.

"We have a variety of different placement opportunities," said volunteer resources coordinator Natalie Little. "We like to match volunteers with what it is they're looking for in their next chapter of life."

Little said current recruitment is focused on retirees, though she said the health system does have some student placements.

She said the NHS is looking for people with day-time availability with good interpersonal skills and who are looking for a way to give back.

Areas of opportunities include medical, such as what Aloian does in the ER, office work and working in gift shops.

For more information on volunteering for the NHS, visit the volunteer section at www.niagaranhs.on.ca or call the volunteer office at 905-378-4647 ext. 44630.

fikeman@postmedia.com



FRANKI ALOIAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Kevin Aloian brings patient Pat Dobson some juice in the ER. Aloian works as an emergency room volunteer at the Niagara Health System's Welland site.

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Shipping slump, renewal pushes fleet retirements

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

While a commodities slump has hit many ship carriers hard, Algoma Central Corp. is still well above water.

Nonetheless, the downturn is helping to speed up the retirement of five bulk freighters.

That move is also being pushed along by new, highly fuel-efficient Equinox Class ships that are part of an Algoma fleet.

Those state-of-the-art Equinox vessels are being built at Jiangsu Yangtze Jiang Shipbuilding Co. in China.

"Some of this is an anticipation of those new ships coming," said Wayne Smith, commercial senior vice-president of Port St. Catharines company.

"We have orders for seven more," said Smith, "with two expected next year and the others hopefully arriving in early 2016."

Those new ships are part of an ambitious fleet renewal, with Algoma hav-

ing invested about \$450 million in the recent phase of its program.

"Some of the retirements are planned, but ... moved up because of the weak market," he said.

"But it really has been a perfect storm with commodities," said Smith pointing, for example, to plunging coal and iron ore prices and a resulting big drop in cargo volumes along the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway.

"Some of this is cyclical phenomenon ... but what's happening overall with commodities is a concern."

Smith said a very-mild winter has also reduced demand for road salt the company's ships normally move from Lake Huron.

Steel Canada's demand was decent last year, but down from record levels a few years ago, he said. Two domestic major steel producers are also in bankruptcy protection and restructuring — U.S. Steel Canada and Essar Steel.

Algoma Inc., a subsidiary of India-based global conglom-



Two ships are pictured in the dry docks at Port Weller. One is the bulker Algoma Guardian and the other is the tanker Algosar, which is being retired.

er Essar Steel.

Smith said there are still bright lights on the horizon.

"It's a good sign the North American economy is doing reasonably well; automotive and tire and housing starts are increasing," he said, adding the recovery from the Great Recession of 2008-09 has been very slow.

Construction materials and aggregates are showing strength and should bode

well for shipping demand, he said, and "we expect that trend to continue this year."

Algoma remains profitable

BOB TYMICKOW/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Another factor relating to shipping retirements is the poor market for scrap metal — in particular scrap steel — in ship-recycling yards. One of those is in Port Colborne and others are international.

"So it's difficult at this time to be able to figure out how and when to scrap the ships," said Smith.

That means vessels slated for retirement by Algoma and other companies may stay berthed until demand for scrap improves.

"We've kept plugging along," Smith said. "And we hope the indicators will continue to improve."

derfaser@postmedia.com
Twitter: @don_stdard



FORM 6
Municipal Act, 2001

SALE OF LAND BY PUBLIC TENDER

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF PORT COLBORNE

Take Notice that tenders are invited for the purchase of the land described below and will be received until 3:00 p.m. local time on April 20, 2016, at the City of Port Colborne Municipal Office, 86 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne.

The tenders will then be opened in public on the same day as soon as possible after 3:00 p.m. at the City of Port Colborne Municipal Office, 86 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne.

Description of Land:

Roll No. 27 11 030 037 10125 0000; Elm Street; FIRSTLY: PIN 64138-0619(LT); Part Lot 29 Concession 3 Humberton, designated Parts 4, 5, 8 Plan 59R13134; SECONDLY: PIN 64138-0521(LT); Part Lot 29 Concession 3 Humberton being Part 1 Plan 59R13756 & Part 2 Plan 59R1334 as in AA76782; S/T easement over Part 3 Plan 59R13134 as in AA76782; Port Colborne; File No. 14-05 Minimum Tender Amount: \$1 935.36

Tenders must be submitted in the prescribed form and must be accompanied by a deposit in the form of a money order or by a bank draft or cheque certified by a bank or trust corporation payable to the municipality and representing at least 20 per cent of the tender amount.

Except as follows, the municipality makes no representation regarding the title to, or any other matters relating to the lands to be sold. Responsibility for ascertaining these matters rests with the potential purchasers.

This sale is governed by the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Tax Sales Rules made under that Act. The successful purchaser will be required to pay the amount tendered plus accumulated taxes, HST if applicable and the relevant land transfer tax.

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For further information regarding this sale and a copy of the prescribed form of tender, visit:
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Niagara Health System
Système De Santé De Niagara

Niagara Health System recruiting two members for Board of Directors

Niagara Health is inviting applications for two (2) new Directors on its volunteer Board of Directors. A multi-site hospital serving the residents of Niagara, Niagara Health provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient clinics and services, including care in the following service areas: Medicine, Surgery, Emergency and Urgent Care, Kidney, Cardiac, Mental Health and Addictions, Cancer and Long-Term Care.

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Dr. Barry Wright, Chair, Nominating Committee c/o Danielle Dube by April 8, 2016.

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Trees cut down in name of green energy

ALLAN BERNER
Postmedia Network

Andy Koopal sounded as he looked down at the freshly cut metre-wide tree trunk, recalling the majestic oak that it once supported.

"That tree was over 150 years old," he said. "It was a perfect healthy tree."

He said the tree - likely a sapling when Canada became a country in 1867 - was one of eight old growth oaks that harbor 10 hectares of farmland on Concession 6 in Wellandport near Side Road 42.

When the Fort Erie resident drove into Wainfleet recently, he said he was shocked to see that trees were being cut down and removed.

"I came by here (last) Saturday. Then I saw the damage they did," he said.

Along with Koopal's trees, likely hundreds more were cut throughout rural west Niagara to make room for transmission lines feeding into new industrial wind turbines being built near by Niagara Region Wind Farm, said Wainfleet's engineering manager Richard Nan.

The company is building a 230-megawatt industrial wind farm with wind turbines located in Wainfleet, West Lincoln and Lincoln.

Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffe said Koopal is one of several residents who have contacted the town concerned about the tree

cutting.

Jeffe said the loss of trees "has really changed the landscape out that way."

"People out there have been calling us and saying they don't like it and they're concerned especially with the removal of the trees," she said. "I know we have some residents call a few weeks back because they'd seen them down a whole whack of trees. It's been ongoing."

Niagara Region Wind Farm project director Michael Berriman couldn't say how many trees would be cut along the 45-kilometre route laid out for the transmission lines.

"That's not public information that we're willing to give out. We haven't finished our tree clearing yet, so I don't actually have a number and it's not something public that we would like to give out," she said.

Berriman said he has complaints from property owners as well. But most of the time, she said, people have raised their concerns before the trees have even been cut, giving the company an opportunity to work with residents to preserve them, when possible.

"Case-by-case, depending what it is, we try to do the best we can to limit the amount of trees being cleared," she said. "Regardless, we only cut what we have to."

Arthourists, she said, are

also working with the company, assessing the area to ensure that the minimum number of trees are cut.

Trees are preserved whenever possible - including several trees that were saved on Shafley Rd. in Wainfleet, not far from Koopal's property, she said.

Nan said municipalities have agreements with the company, allowing it to clear trees without the road right of way.

He said the Ontario Energy Act also allows wind energy companies "to cut everything within 10 feet of that hydro wire," including trees on private property.

Although property owners are supposed to be notified prior to the tree cutting, Berriman said he was never contacted by the company.

"They never contacted me or gave me an option," he complained.

Berriman, however, said notices were sent out to affected property owners by courier last July or August,



ALLAN BERNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Andy Koopal looks over the stump where an old growth oak tree once stood beside his property in Wainfleet. Trees are being cut in rural west Niagara for transmission lines to serve new wind turbines.

informing them about the tree cutting.

"We also drop off letters on a regular basis for notifications of what we're doing," she said.

Nan said the agreement with municipalities also requires the company to plant new trees to replace the ones that were cut.

Nan said the company is required to plant several trees to replace larger old growth

trees, such as the oak bordering on Koopal's property.

But newly planted saplings are reportedly of how many are planted - pale in comparison to the 150-year-old oak trees that were cut down.

"We're not going to get a new 150-year-old oak tree," Nan said. "That's the biggest issue."

Berriman said the tree cutting will continue for a few more weeks, to allow for the

transmission lines.

The full project is scheduled to be complete by this August.

Koopal said it's ironic that while old growth trees are being cut down for a "green energy" project.

"They're so concerned about the environment, and then they cut perfectly healthy trees down," he said.

Wainfleet has led efforts against allowing wind turbines to be built in rural communities.

Last week, the township issued a news release saying 51 other municipalities have so far endorsed a resolution passed by the township council in late January 2016, calling on the provincial government not to award more feed-in-tariff contracts for power generation from wind since a recent auditor general's report showed Ontario has a surplus of power generation capacity.

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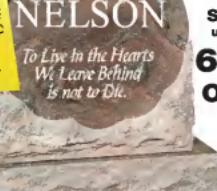


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Planning for Niagara's growth 25 years from now

RAY SPITERI
Postmedia Network

Niagara needs to be collaborative, innovative and nimble to reach its full potential, according to the Niagara 2041 Growth Strategy.

Niagara was required to update its growth forecasts following changes to Ontario's growth plan.

"The old strategy, the 2031 strategy, had about half the population growth that this one does, and the problem is that if we don't have this growth prospect in place than we can't develop our lands the way we should be able to," said Niagara Falls Reg. Coun. Selina Volpati.

Diana Moreale, manager of community planning and development services for Niagara Region, made a presentation to Niagara Falls city council earlier this month on the 2041 strategy. Volpati was also in attendance.

Moreale played a five-minute video outlining how regional officials will plan for the next 25 years.

The video's script was written by regional staff, but was narrated by actor Brent Meidlinger.

"A key to growing our population is gaining private-sector investment. This growth won't just happen all by itself, though. We need to make it happen. We need a strategy that's collaborative, innovative and nimble," said Meidlinger.

He said between 2011 and 2041, the province has forecasted Niagara to gain almost 170,000 new residents and 80,000 jobs, but the region is not on target to achieve those goals.

"While neighbouring communities are growing at an average of one to three per cent per year, Niagara's population growth rate is significantly lower, around 500 people per year," said Meidlinger. "To keep pace, we should be growing by around 6,000 people per year. We need to do better."

Niagara is part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which happens to be the 13th largest economic-impact zone in the world, he said.

Now is "on the edge of that horseshoe, and that can make us a bit isolated from Toronto, where most of the action happens."

"We need to improve our physical connections to the rest of the Golden Horseshoe."

shoe in order to share in its growth. This means expanding transit options like GO trains in and out of Niagara, improving connections to GTA business communities, and attracting foreign investment."

Meldinger said Niagara needs to be proactive in establishing the region as a receptor of growth instead of letting other communities "reap all the benefits."

"Tapping into the Golden Horseshoe's economic powerhouse is that Toronto could open up huge potential for economic growth in Niagara. If we were able to achieve the projected growth-rate targets the region would be growing at a rate that's three times greater than that we've experienced over the past 25 years combined. As population growth rates rise, so do employment rates."

He said communities in Niagara are growing at different rates.

"All of our communities need to be business friendly and make private-sector investment easy."

This means we need to look at all of our policies, procedures and processes to make sure that high-quality development is easy."

Meldinger said that is the only way Niagara can compete with neighbouring regions such as Hamilton or the Greater Toronto Area.

"When businesses are considering investing in our communities, they are looking for business-friendly development policies and a talented work force."

As part of the 2041 strategy, the Region is undertaking a transportation master plan, a water and wastewater servicing plan and a municipal comprehensive review will look at available land across Niagara to "ensure we have enough to sustain our expected growth."

Volpati said there are lands along the Queen Elizabeth Way between Niagara Falls and Fort Erie that should be developed.

"That's our gateway into the American market, it's our gateway into Toronto," she said. "Surely, businesses would like to develop here, but we have to have shovel-ready premises that these people can move into."

Volpati said Niagara is fortunate to have Brock University and Niagara College, "two institutions that are always at the forefront of innovation and technology."

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Port Colborne deemed in need of physicians

FRANKI KEMAN
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne and Wainfleet have been added to the list of communities deemed in need of doctors by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

"This is great news for Port Colborne," said the city's health services co-ordinator, Joanne Ferraccioli.

Ferraccioli and the municipality wrote a letter in February to the local branch of the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) asking for the LHIN's support to be added to the list.

Earlier this month, Ferraccioli received the good news.

Ferraccioli said the decision will make it possible for Port Colborne to recruit physicians who have been eyeing the city, but were unable to join the city's family

health organization group practice due to the provincially managed entry program.

She said the city will now look at recruiting physicians who are a good fit for the community.

In an emailed statement, Eric Hoskins, minister of health and long-term care, said "a number of factors were considered in determining the list of under-served communities."

Factors considered include the ratio of doctors serving the community, rurality, as well as input from each Local Health Integration Network, based on their local understanding of demographics, socio-economic factors, service capacity, access issues and unique population health needs."

fkeman@postmedia.com

NHS gets 'exemplary standing' accreditation

Niagara Health System has had its accreditation status upgraded to "accredited with exemplary standing" for 2015-19.

The upgrading for the NHS — its first ever in that category — followed an appeal of its original accreditation.

In a release last week, the NHS said exemplary standing is for organizations that go beyond requirements of Accreditation

Canada and demonstrate excellence in quality improvement.

In November, surveyors from Accreditation Canada travelled to Niagara to complete an on-site accreditation of the hospital system.

They visited every NHS site, program and service. Surveyors spoke to staff, physicians, volunteers, interviewed patients and families, and reviewed documents.

Accreditation Canada is an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits health-care and social services organizations in Canada and internationally.



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Tobacco enforcement streamlined through pilot project

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Niagara Region is taking the

lead with tobacco enforcement in Ontario.

The local public health unit is one of four across the prov-

ince selected to participate in a one-year Tobacco Tax Act pilot project funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

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The project, a collaboration between the province and Ministry of Finance, aims to co-ordinate tobacco retailer inspections and enforcement efforts, while also addressing the seriousness of contraband and tax evasion.

It will provide Niagara's five tobacco control officers (CTO) cross designation to enforce both the Tobacco Tax Act and Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

"The purpose is to have more efficiencies and effectiveness at the ground level," said Brenda Marshall, the Region's manager of chronic disease and injury prevention, who oversees the tobacco enforcement program.

It is expected to create any additional work for CTOs and is intended to streamline the enforcement process.

Further details of the initiative, set to begin in April, have yet to be released by the province, but an initial report was presented during the Region's public health and social services committee meeting Tuesday.

The project is expected to provide insight into the contraband situation in Niagara.

The extent of the issue in the region is still unknown at this point, Marshall said, calling the initiative a "starting point" for addressing the problem.

Regional medical officer of health Dr. Vicki Jeffery said the majority of Niagara retailers are "trying their best to do everything by the rules" and "most do a good job."

Occasionally, however, improperly packaged products or those without necessary warning labels are found on store shelves.

Officers are tasked with educating retailers, providing warnings and, when deemed necessary, levying fines for improperly packaged products.

"Our goal is never to charge. Our goal is compliance," associate medical officer of health Dr. Andrea Feller said, adding regional compliance rates are "excellent."

The project's effectiveness will be reviewed in terms of education and warnings, Jaeger said.

"If it's not effective, then why take it provinciewide?"

While details of why Niagara was chosen for the project are not known, Feller felt there were a number of likely factors.

"We're assuming part of it is our age-standardized smoking rates are higher than the provincial rates," she said. In 2014, 20.4 per cent of the region's adult population was using tobacco daily.

Niagara's economy and local property rates also make the area a target for prohibited products sold at cheaper, untaxed rates, she said, calling contraband a "huge concern in terms of our progress."

The region's proximity to the U.S. border, as well as its mix of rural and urban communities, likely also contributed to its inclusion in the project, Feller said.

She believes Niagara will be a "good informant for the ministry for this new legislative approach."

The Region has had a tobacco enforcement team in place since 1994.

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LOCAL NEWS

Crackdown planned on housing fraud

MARYVANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Housing wants to put a fraud strategy in place in an effort to combat abuse within the system.

The organization has requested inclusion of \$100,000 in its 2016 budget for a housing fraud task force. This could essentially mean the hiring or training of an eligibility review officer (ERO) who would investigate suspicious cases among affordable housing tenants.

NRH has requested the strategy, as well as several other initiatives, be funded by the organization's \$883,000 surplus from 2015.

A decision is expected to be made by regional council March 24.

The issue of abuse in the system is one of the tools to identify it was raised by both councillors and housing service providers at a recent board meeting.

Ellen Balmain believes fraud occurs in some NRH units, though she could not say definitively to what extent.

The housing chief executive officer said that while staff are able to monitor eligibility and household occupancy to some degree, the resources and authority to conduct more in-depth investigations aren't yet in place.



PAUL GRENIER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Paul Grenier, a Welland regional councillor and chair of Niagara Regional Housing, is pictured outside the NRH's Fitch Street development. Plans are in the works to establish a housing fraud task force.

When a complaint is issued or suspicions raised by staff, the organization can make the tenant in question aware of the allegations and seek verification, but there is little recourse to investigate.

"More people are in and out moving adult children of the family or distant relatives in who have employment and not declaring their

income is really hard to follow up on. That's a big part of the problem," Balmain said.

"It's difficult to monitor that top of the regular duties of property management and supporting our most needy folks and helping them with eviction prevention and complex social and health problems."

Adding an eligibility review

officer is intended to catch situations that might be falling through the cracks without the additional resources.

An ERO has an increased level of authority under the Housing Services Act, allowing for the application of search warrants among other investigative tools.

It's not yet clear whether the fraud strategy will mean a new hire for NRH or training from within the organization. Best practices will be reviewed before any decision is made.

As housing is a limited asset with an ever-increasing waiting list, it's important that the organization ensure people occupying units are eligible to do so.

"It's about being fair. We want to make sure they're declaring what they're supposed to declare," Balmain said.

"We believe the vast majority of our people are honest, forthright and following the rules. Sometimes it must feel to them that they're towing the line and other people aren't and we don't have the tools to address that and change it — yet."

While EROs are common when it comes to social assistance, it's not yet a common practice among housing organizations, Balmain said. However, that's a trend that's expected to change as demand for housing grows across the

province.

While NRH board chair Paul Grenier, a Welland regional councillor, doesn't believe there's "an exceptional amount" of abuse within the local housing system, he called it critical that any existing cases be addressed.

Having the resources available to investigate when suspicions arise will preclude the issue "from becoming an epidemic," he said, calling the \$100,000 spent within the near

\$54-million housing budget a "worthwhile" spend.

Grenier is hopeful that by having a fraud strategy in place and identifying that issues exist, people may be deterred from attempting to cheat the system.

"This isn't going to turn into a witch hunt," he said.

"It's more about managing the asset and the funding appropriately."

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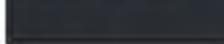
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Margaret Trudeau to speak in Niagara

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Margaret Trudeau is returning to Niagara this spring for the annual Pathstone Foundation gala in Niagara Falls, to talk about her experience with mental health.

Trudeau - the mother of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and ex-wife of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau - has struggled with bipolar disorder. She will speak at the 2016 Hope Award gala about her life and reducing the stigma that surrounds mental health issues.

Fort Erie pediatrician Dr. Hilda Makken will be presented with the Hope Award for her work helping local children and families deal with mental health problems.

The foundation supports Pathstone Mental Health, the region's key provider of mental health services for children. The organization helped more than 4,000 local children last year.

The gala takes place June 10 at the Fallsview Casino. For more information or to purchase tickets, go online to www.PathstoneMentalHealth.ca or phone 905-688-6850, ext. 166.

Public housing reserve could be replenished



SELINA VOLPATI

Niagara Regional Housing may see its reserves replenished after dipping into savings to meet regional council's zero per cent budget guidelines.

The regional corporate services committee reviewed a series of new spending requests last week from the housing board to be supported by NRH's \$883,000 surplus plus from 2015.

Included was \$100,000 for a housing fraud task force, \$40,000 for a caseload and capacity assessment review, \$50,000 for a mobile workforce, \$140,000 for an integrated housing information system, \$25,000 for a strategic plan and \$429,000 for urgent rental subsidies.

Of the surplus funds, \$99,000 has been earmarked for the general capital levy reserve for the Broadacres development project in Niagara Falls.

During 2016 budget deliberations late last year, the housing organization took \$393,000 from its reserves in order to meet the Region's request for no budget increase.

The decision to pull funds from reserves caused "a lot of

kerfuffle," Niagara Falls Coun. Selina Volpati said, adding she wants to see those dollars returned.

She made an amendment to replenish reserves of the \$393,000 by subtracting that number from the amount allotted to urgent repairs.

Grimbsy Coun. Tony Quirk

was not in support of NRH spending the surplus dollars because it's "an additional spend request and is contrary to what we passed in the budget."

"We're talking about a series of spends that's going to increase the baseline budget outside of the emergency repairs," he said.

St. Catharines Coun. Brian Heit felt the issue could have been avoided if budget deliberations had been put on hold until year-end members had a chance to review the oversages, were available.

He recommended future budget talks occur in January or February to allow council to get a better picture of where the Region and its boards, agencies and commissions stand prior to approving the year's finances.

Henry D'Angela hoped to see the housing board's surplus dollars put into a reserve for new units to help tackle



TONY QUIRK

you're putting it back in," he told committee. "You wanted the zero. You got the zero. Now you're adding stuff after the fact."

Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn also took issue with the process.

Council celebrated its zero per cent tax increase last year but a 2.9 per cent spending request is now on the table only a few months later, he said.

"How do we reconcile that?"

Corporate services commissioner Maurice Lewis confirmed that because the additional requests would be funded through surplus dollars, they would have no impact on the tax levy.

The fate of the surplus dollars will be decided at the March 24 regional council meeting.

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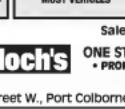
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Men in hats: Les Marmitons Niagara

TIFFANY MAYER
Special to Postmedia Network

There are few people who can carry a conversation about sous-vide cooking. But Ross Macfarlane and his fellow members of Les Marmitons Niagara are aces at it.

It's what you'd expect from a group of men who gather once a month to cook a gourmet meal in the kitchen at Niagara College's Benchmark restaurant, all under the direction of some of Niagara's top culinary talent.

Although they can't agree on the merit of slow-cooking steak in a water bath — Macfarlane holds fast to cooking meat on his Big Green Egg grill — all differences are set aside in the kitchen in the name of learning the art and science of cooking, and eating each lesson afterward.

In the process, they dispense a箴言 that's as good as many cooking schools': If anything, having 20-plus men chopping, roasting, grilling or boiling makes that broth, and what would otherwise be another Monday night, more delectable.

"I love getting into the kitchen and putting it all together," Macfarlane said about making a meal with his Marmitons pals. "The camaraderie in the kitchen is great."

Everyone gets along well and they generally have a good time."

So much so that based on Macfarlane's Twitter feed on the first Monday of the month when Les Marmitons meet, I often wish I was genetically predisposed to join them.

Les Marmitons Niagara is the local chapter of an international social and gastronomic club for men interested in food, wine and the culinary arts. Every month, they enlist a local chef to lead them through preparing and eating a multi-course meal. The group has been around officially since 2005 but it was in the works for some time before that, thanks to founder Macfarlane's tenacity and appetite for good food and company.

Macfarlane is the ultimate gourmand. He's on a first-name basis with Niagara's biggest chefs and can give dining recommendations in cities beyond the region's borders.

He also knows his way around a kitchen, and discovered while living in Ottawa in the early 1990s that a stove could be a social force.

Macfarlane, a lawyer, was having lunch with a chef client who had cooked at a local Marmitons meeting. "He

said, 'We did a classic French menu. There were 35 guys there and we used 35 pounds of butter. You'd love it,'" Macfarlane recalled.

Fast forward a few years and Macfarlane, now living in Niagara, saw a news story about Niagara College launching a culinary program. He thought the teaching kitchen would be ideal for hosting Marmitons meetings. He attended chapter meetings in Toronto and

learned the inner workings to establish a group here.

Finally, he gathered six friends to make a three-course meal in his home. Not only did they create perfect five-spice duck breast, they laid the foundation for Les Marmitons Niagara.

Today there are nearly 40 Marmitons in Niagara. They're lawyers, factory workers, woodworkers and retirees who share an insatiable love of food

and cooking. There's no secret handshake, but members do get to wear chef's whites and puffy hats with stripes indicating their rank.

Macfarlane knew the group would be a success after its first meeting with guest chef Mark Hix. In fact, Hix had summoned everyone around a 15-pound halibut that needed filleting. He carved one side of the fish before asking who wanted to do the other.

"There were at least half a dozen who said 'I do.' I thought 'This is why I want to do this,'" Macfarlane said.

But their monthly cooking and eating sessions do more than benefit their taste buds. The best-fed service club in Niagara has hosted events that, to date, have raised more than \$80,000 for bursaries for students in

Continued on next page



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Men in hats: Les Marmitons Niagara

From previous page

Niagara College's culinary, hospitality, wine and brewing programs. Most recently they partnered with the college to make a Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, the sales of which will also help students.

On the night I join them in the kitchen, my ticket being my notebook, they're working with

Anthony Greco, Niagara college grad and chef at Zest Kitchen in Fonthill. It's the sixth time Greco has led the group in the kitchen.

He divides his eager protégés into stations like one would find in a restaurant: meats, vegetables and pastry.

They work together sorting herbs, brining pears, making

ricotta and grilling fish, all the while paying close attention to the direction from Greco and helpers Tim Hardy, Zest sous-chef, and Chris Lawson, sous-chef at Niagara-on-the-Lake's Garrison House.

Former Toronto chapter executive Gary Bell helps prep caramelized leeks to go with the first course of striped bass with

Mutsu apple, parsnip puree, sea asparagus and chervil. The connections Bell has made standng over a six-burner gas range are as palatable as the meals.

"I've always loved to cook," he said. "When I moved to Niagara I knew a lot of people, but now I know a lot more."

Once all the components of a course are ready, everyone

INPORT NEWS ■ THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2016

clamours for a spot around a large stainless steel table to watch Greco plate. Though they're learning how to serve the night's meal, they're also getting a taste for how things are done in restaurants throughout the region. "It's one thing to have a recipe... but most people don't have an understanding of what it takes to do 30 plates at a

time with hot and cold (components)," Greco said. "So it gives them an idea of what we do on a daily basis." Cooking with Les Marmitons is also a way to test new dishes. Greco has used components he tried out with the group on the menu at Zest. Mostly, the appeal is being with people who eat up everything he does.



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LOCAL NEWS

Safety village rises again from the ruins

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Niagara Safety Village has begun to look new again after vandals destroyed parts of the miniature town more than a month ago.

Contractors have been busily working since last week to repair the village. Windows to many of the buildings there had to be replaced, as well as doors and signs.

Shirley Cordiner, executive director at the safety village, said the windows that were destroyed by a large amount once on them. She said the new windows will need to be painted to add some colour.

"It looks pretty blank out there now right ... We are getting there, other than a few things," she said as she looked

over at the building.

The school bus and ambulance had to be removed due to the severe damage.

Cordiner said they will be replacing the vehicles as soon as they can. Niagara EMS is donating a decommissioned ambulance and it will be brought to the village once it is ready.

The village will also receive a small school bus from Daniel bus lines in St. Catharines. Cordiner said they might only get the bus sometime during the summer.



SHIRLEY CORDINER

"They are important because they are part of our teaching tools. They aren't just there," she said.

Cordiner hopes to have the village up and running by April 4. Students from across the region will begin visiting the village at the beginning of April until the end of June.

"It is the young ones that do use the miniature village, so it will be all ready to go to have the little ones come in. That was the goal."

Cordiner said community support has been "outstanding."

Some of the proceeds from the Welland-Pelham Chamber of Commerce auction on April 21 will be donated to the safety village. The annual auction will be held at Peninsula

Lakes Golf Club.

Cordiner said Lowes in Niagara Falls has stepped up to assist the organization.

"I met with the manager and this week they started in support of us and the community," Cordiner said.

Manager Christian Nelson said Lowes has an annual fundraiser to help local organizations. This year staff chose the safety village because of the vandalism.

"We're a local non-profit

organization that aligns with us. The safety village is a great organization and it is great to support them," he said.

So far the store has raised about \$1,000 and will continue to collect donations at the store located at 7959 McLeod Rd.

Nelson said people don't need to make a purchase to donate.

Lowes corporation will match up to 50 per cent of the money raised or up to \$2,000.

Regional Police Sgt. Brian Smith said investigators have exhausted all of their leads, but remain hopeful someone will come forward with information.

People can contact Crime Stoppers anonymously by calling 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or online at www.niagaratips.com. Smith said people can also contact him at 905-688-4111 ext. 3314.

mallenberg@postmedia.com

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PORT COLBORNE

**NOTICE TO CITIZENS
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2016 - 6:30 PM.
2016 WATER AND WASTEWATER BUDGET
AND URBAN STORM SEWER DRAINAGE FEE**

The Deputy Mayor has called a special meeting of City Council to be held on Monday, March 21, 2016, commencing at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 66 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne. The purpose of the meeting is to consider the 2016 Water and Wastewater Budget, including an Urban Storm Sewer Drainage Fee.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting. Persons wishing to address Council may contact the City Clerk's office to register as a delegation until noon on Monday, March 21, 2016.

The agenda for the special meeting will be available on the City's website during the afternoon of Thursday, March 17, 2016. Printed copies of may also be obtained from the Clerk's Office.

Dated this 17th day of March, 2016.

Ashley Grigg, City Clerk

City of Port Colborne

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Port Colborne High School
211 Elgin Street - Room 314

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April 20, or May 18
1:00 p.m.

St.Catharines - Day Program
Lifetime Learning Centre
335 Lake Street - Room 104

Wednesday March 23,
April 20, or May 18
1:00 p.m.

Niagara Falls - Evening/Wknd
Westlane Secondary School
5960 Pfiont Rd - Room 1091

Wednesday March 23,
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